

rachis, others in which the stripe is much broader, perhaps with a tendency to break into bars, then others distinctly barred, with still other stages between these and wholly colored feathers. It is rare of course to find such a variety of intergrading patterns in a single bird, but a strong approach to such a condition is by no means rare. So long as these different patterns cannot be demonstrated to be *successional stages in the same feather*, it seems idle to consider them in any strict sense evolutionary stages, or to refer to them as illustrating the evolution of color pattern, evolution implying the evolving of one thing by direct outgrowth from another; and in like manner the term 'self-coloured' in such a connection is clearly inadmissible and misleading. In other words the implied genetic connection does not exist; the relation is simply incidental.

Feathers are classified as striped, barred, etc., in accordance with their pattern of marking, and the markings themselves are indicated by a variety of descriptive terms; and, as almost every conceivable style is represented, there is necessarily a gradation of one form into another, so that all may be considered arbitrarily or theoretically as modifications of the simplest type of all, the longitudinally streaked feather, which seems to be the main conclusion of Mr. Bonhote's paper.

That evolution has played a prominent part in the development of the different styles of coloration that characterize particular groups of birds is beyond question, adapting them to their varied environments and different modes of life, but we do not see how Mr. Bonhote's paper bears especially upon this phase of the question; nor, in fact does he appear to claim that it has such bearing. — J. A. A.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

A Biographical and Autobiographical Letter.

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs:—The following letter, by Colonel Bernard J. D. Irwin, Surgeon, U. S. Army (retired), throws so much light upon the least-known period of the lives of two of America's distinguished naturalists that I take pleasure in presenting it to the readers of 'The Auk.'

EDGAR A. MEARNs.

COBOURG, CANADA.

Sept. 21, 1901.

Dear Major Mearns:—

In response to your request it affords me pleasure to answer your queries in regard to the late Major Charles E. Bendire, U. S. A. Yes, your assumption is correct, it was I who initiated in him the taste for natural